United Nations E/CN.5/2019/NGO/61

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
15 November 2018

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Fifty-seventh session
11–21 February 2019
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: Priority Theme: Addressing inequalities and challenges to social inclusion through fiscal, wage and social protection policies

Statement submitted by DESSI International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Applique Arts & Crafts Entrepreneurship for Rural Women Empowerment in Pakistan

Technical & Vocational, Education & Training (TVET) and skill development increase abilities to innovate and adopt new market trends and advanced technologies for recognition of skilled rural women. There is huge gap in the needed skills and available resources. If Pakistan wants to reach a global market then it has to produce quality supplies which are in-demand so that long-term income generation source can be streamlined for the poverty eradication and respectable image of rural women artisans. For rural women's entrepreneurship, producing applique arts & crafts items is an ideal category for which they can be easily permitted, as well as can adopt instantly in the short span of time without any problems.

The situation of women in Pakistan is most vulnerable at rural level. They don't have even the right to obtain an education or contribute in income generation activities for the household. In the society, it is considered that educated girls or income generation by women does not keep the honour of the family, but rather that it involves vulgar activities, which cause the defaming of the family; so they are kept in the homes. In the family, boys are given priority over girls. Girls are also married at early ages and are expected to procreate children and up-bring them. In most of the cases, women and girls are not consulted by their parents when making decisions about their marriage and education. Violence and discrimination against women will be found in most areas of Pakistan. They are subject to all kinds of violence in terms of physical, mental, sexual or structural means.

The below are deficiencies, particularly in the rural women, which needs to overcome:

- Lack of technical, vocational, soft and life skills
- Lack of training and participation opportunities
- Lack of financial and marketing linkages/access
- Inadequate systems and techniques to support rural women's micro enterprises
- Lack of awareness and poor implementation of government initiatives
- Lack of capacity building, advocacy and strong community-based institutions
- Lack of monitoring, proper feedback mechanism and quality follow-up

Women in villages are deprived and marginalized and their conditions are rather appalling. Women in countryside live in the worst conditions socially, economically and politically. Rates of female literacy and participation in economic activities is very low. Since they live in a traditional tribal society structure, they are bound not to go out for economic activities. However, a lot of them are semi-skilled and they stitch cloths semi-finished and do some embroidery at their homes. Rural women artisans are making applique rilli work, needlework and other hand-made items which they preferably use for personal or family use. But there is huge demand of handmade appliqué rilli items and hand embroidered items locally, nationally and globally. For which they can be supported with latest technology, research, advocacy and provision of TVET related capacity building initiatives. If they would produce quality of in-demand items, then they can surely earn huge amount for their dignified livelihood through establishing self-help enterprises directly from their homes.

Rural women need to be supported to further enhance their skills, especially in terms of making their quality hand-made products more marketable and also linking

them with proper marketing strategies so their income earning options can be increased. Their skills can be further developed, and their golden hands can more be polished with motivation, TVFT and other skills. Presently, applique arts & crafts are the part of new fashion industry trends and making bed covers only have now been changed in the women wear and home decorations globally. Therefore, demand of hand-made items has recently been increased and its supply has been decreased accordingly. If we focus on creating more quality rural women artisans, then we have to make their proper capacity building and provide them with technical knowledge and international market trends information. So that they can properly plan, make and produce relevant market demanded items.

Hence, this statement has been in black and white by the DESSI International to reach rural women's voices at global level so that some potential income generation activities and projects of capacity building can be implemented at gross-roots level to eradicate poverty. Through such activities, women's capacity building can be achieved in imparting TVET, soft, and life skills; and it can also create a society of social and financial entrepreneurs with the idea of self-employment in living with dignity for long-term sustainability solutions.

Rural women entrepreneurship in applique arts & crafts will create privileged and resourceful communities in Pakistan, which can further make following social changes:

- Entrepreneurship promotion
- Skills development and skills Enhancement
- Market understanding and linkage/access
- Reach at local, national and international markets
- Skills and psycho-social outcomes
- Business creation, business survival, degree of formalization
- Sustainable income generation source
- Enhanced Earnings
- Promotion of handmade cultural items
- Creating a soft, technical and respectable image of Pakistan

Promotion of rural women entrepreneurship in applique arts & crafts and hand-made items is also the solution to reduce rural migration and overcome disrespect of rural women in societies. Government of Pakistan and international communities have initiated many free skill development initiatives but, in spite of these, Pakistan has been considered among the industrially undeveloped countries. These local and international free TVET and advocacy initiatives should focus on raising awareness among rural women semi-skilled artisans and provide them platform and advocacy to promote their social and economical entrepreneurship in producing quality applique arts & crafts and hand-made items. So that they can easily earn their dignified livelihood as well as create respectable recognition globally.